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MONTHLY NEWSLETTER

United Nations Information Centre (UNIC) Kathmandu

VOLUME 9 MARCH 2009

UN High Commissioner for Human Rights visits Nepal

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UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Navanethem Pillay in a meeting with Prime Minister Pushpa Kamal Dahal during her visit to Nepal.

Kathmandu, March: UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Navanethem Pillay made her first official visit to Nepal from 18 to 22 March. Among others, she held discussions with the President, the Prime Minister, Speaker and Ministers of Foreign Affairs and Peace and Reconstruction, Commissioner of the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) and official of other national human rights institutions, members of civil society, victims of human rights violations and families of victims, leaders of political parties and diplomatic representatives. The High Commissioner also met with Head of UN agencies.

At a press conference prior to her departure, the High Commissioner explained OHCHR's request for a three-year extension of its mandate, which expires in June 2009. "The Prime Minister assured me that discussions were taking place on the mandate extension of my Office in Nepal, and that he would communicate a decision to me in two weeks. The leaders of the Nepali Congress, UML and MPRF all assured me of their support for the extension of this mandate. We are also confident that we have the support of civil society," she said, The visit was organized in cooperation with the NHRC.



Full Speech:

(ENG) http://nepal.ohchr.org/en/resources/Documents/English/statements/HC/Year2009/2009_03_22_HC_Final_Statement_E.pdf

(NEP) http://nepal.ohchr.org/en/resources/Documents/Nepali/statements/HC/Year2009/2009_03_22_HC_Final_Statement_N.pdf

UN News

ESCAP Report 2009 launched



UN Resident Coordinator and UNIC Director Mr. Robert Piper at the launching of ESCAP Report 2009, Also seen are National Information Officer Mr. Ram Babu Shah (left) and Director of Centre for Policy Research and Analysis Mr. Jyoti Lohani. Photo: UNIC

KATHMANDU, 27 March: ESCAP Report 2009 titled "Addressing Triple Threats to Development" was launched by UNIC in Nepal amidst a media event. The Report was launched by UN Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator Mr. Robert Piper. The highlights of the Report were presented by the Director of Centre for Policy Research and Analysis Mr. Jyoti Lohani. The event was widely covered in the local print and electronic media.

(See more in page 3)

Direct download link: **http://www.unescap.org/pdd/publications/survey2009/download/Survey2009.pdf**
Official ESCAP: **http://www.unescap.org/survey2009/**



Focal Points from UN agencies, NGOs and INGOs in the PSEA training. Photo: UNIC

UNIC participates in PSEA training

KATHMANDU, 24 March: UNIC participated in an inter-agency 4 day-long training on Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (PSEA) for UN heads of agencies NGOs, INGOs and focal points. The objective of the workshop was to increase understanding of sexual abuse and exploitation and its consequences; To advance understanding of UN Secretary General's Bulletin and standards of conduct and; To enable participants to fulfill Focal Point responsibilities. The training was imparted by Jeanne Ward and Loura Hovi. The participation of UN agencies in the training was very encouraging.

Japanese students visit WHO

KATHMANDU, 19 March: UNIC facilitated the visit of a 18 member team from Health Cooperative Association of Japanese Consumer's Cooperative Union to the WHO office. Their objective was to learn about the "poverty situation especially in the context of medical care in Nepal." Dr. Alexander Andjaparidze, WHO Representative and Chief of Mission briefed the students on the topics. The participants consisted of students studying medical, dental, nursing and development studies.



Japanese students in a meeting with Dr. Alexander Andjapardze of WHO. Photo: UNIC

UN News



Economic and Social Survey of Asia and the Pacific 2009

Addressing Triple Threats to Development

ESCAP Report on Nepal

Growth moderates but remains robust: Nepal's improved political stability, transition towards stable democracy and more conducive investment climate are expected to pave the way for a more robust economic performance over the medium term. Nepal's GDP grew at 5.6% in 2008, compared with 2.6% in 2007. Despite a weak performance in merchandise exports and manufacturing, the growth was supported by a satisfactory expansion in agriculture, an encouraging increase in tourism and some improvements in services. Overseas workers' remittances have been growing, and continue to play a major role in the growth of the economy by stimulating domestic consumption. The country's GDP is expected to grow around 5% in 2009. However, global financial crisis and economic slowdown may have even a stronger adverse impact on GDP growth.

Rapid increase in inflation: Inflation has been driven up in all the countries of South Asia, partly by unrelenting pressures from higher international commodity prices, particularly the prices of oil, basic metals and selected food items. Because of Nepal's fixed exchange rate with the Indian rupee, and the fact that India is a major source of imports, inflation in the country is also heavily influenced by price developments in India. In Nepal, inflation accelerated to 7.7% in 2008 from 6.4% in 2007 mainly due to the rise in energy and food prices. With fall in oil and other commodity prices in international markets, inflation is expected to come down in 2009.

Fiscal situation deteriorated: The Government of Nepal has had success in raising its revenues over the last two years. Revenue collection increased by 22.6% in 2008 on top of a 21.3% increase in 2007. As a result, the revenue-to-GDP ratio improved to 13.1% in 2008. Expenditures also witnessed a sharp increase, with development expenditure growing at a high rate. The budget deficit stood at 4% of GDP in 2008, almost the same as the previous year. The Government tried to reduce the huge subsidy on fuel oil by increasing oil prices towards the end of fiscal year 2008.

External balances under pressure: The surge in prices of fuel oil, food and other commodities created severe problems for the external balances of most countries in South Asia. In Nepal, higher imports and slower growth of exports led to further widening of the merchandise trade deficit in 2008. But workers' remittances increased by more than 50% to roughly $2.2 billion in 2008, helping to move the current account deficit into surplus in 2008. Furthermore, a surge in foreign aid contributed to a rise in the overall balance of payment surplus, which led in turn to an increase in foreign exchange reserves in 2008. In case global economic crisis persists for a longer period, workers' remittances can fall, causing difficulties for balance of payments.

Poverty and widespread inequalities remain major challenge: Among long-term challenges, poverty remains a major problem for most countries in South Asia. Also, economic and social inequalities remain widespread. The main challenge for countries in the subregion, therefore, is not only to improve growth rates on a sustained basis but also to make them more inclusive for a rapid reduction in poverty and inequality. The composition of sectoral growth has important implications for pro-poor growth. Agriculture, construction and small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) generate pro-poor growth through employment generation, and should be supported.

To benefit from employment opportunities, the development of human resources is essential. In turn, education and health services are key to the development of human resources. Public provision of these services is crucial to the poor, as they can not afford to pay the prices charged by private providers. Print and public media should be vigorously used to change people's attitude towards girls' education and other forms of social exclusions and to ensure that the poorest of the poor have access to information on available opportunities.

Social safety nets are also essential for the poor and vulnerable who are unable to benefit from economic growth directly or indirectly. This support should be strengthened to provide a coping mechanism for the poor, especially in the event of macroeconomic shocks such as current global economic crisis. Without such interventions to address the problem of poverty and inequality, rapid economic growth cannot be sustained over the long term, for there are clear links between inequality and social unrest and violence.

Lack of physical infrastructure is a major impediment to business growth in South Asia, most notably shortcomings in electricity service. Huge gaps between supply and demand of electricity exist in several countries in the subregion, and these gaps will widen unless new electricity capacity is added. Involvement of the private sector through private public partnerships is the only way to meet the growing needs for energy. Along with generating more electricity, it is important to efficiently utilize existing capacity. Transmission and distribution losses are massive, partly due to theft. Rehabilitation and proper maintenance of the distribution system should be a priority to minimize transmission and distribution losses.

UN News

UNFPA's new approach to humanitarian response



Pregnant women in UNFPA supported health clinic for Internally Displaced Persons in Saptari. Photo: UNFPA

Kathmandu 30 March: A significant component of UNFPA's work in Nepal is humanitarian response. In 2008, floods, in both western and eastern Nepal, affected more than 240,000 people. Reproductive health (RH) needs, gender based violence (GBV) and HIV/AIDS were largely left unaddressed in the first phases of flooding, endangering many lives. UNFPA responded to the floods to provide life saving services, including emergency obstetric care and prevention of gender based violence as well as HIV transmissions. UNFPA is currently shifting the implementation modality to focus on early recovery activities.

UNFPA is an active member of the health and protection clusters also chairs the recently established sub-clusters on gender based violence and reproductive health. UNFPA's resources for support to humanitarian activities have increased significantly from circ. USD 30,000 last year to circ. 800,000 this year.

In an effort to move from reactive interventions to proactive preparedness and response capacity, UNFPA Nepal hosted a number of technical assistance missions in March. Ms. Selenge Lkhagva and Ms. Pam Steele from UNFPA Procurement Services Branch in Copenhagen; a study team from Columbia University and Ms. Priya Marwah and Ms. Cecile Mazzacurati from the Humanitarian Response Branch at UNFPA HQ, New York assessed procurement and logistics systems in Nepal, UNFPA effectiveness in humanitarian assistance responses and how to address the existing gas and challenges. UNFPA's internal Humanitarian Assistance Working Group will take the lead in implementing the recommendations of these missions within the context of a comprehensive contingency planning.

UNIC joins UN Agencies in marking International Women's Day



Mass rally on the occasion of International Women's Day 2009. Photo: UNIC

KATHMANDU. 8 March: UNIC joined the UN system in Nepal in marking the International Women's Day on 8the of March 2009. On the occasion, a mass rally was organized in the capital led by the National Women's Commission. Various organizations took part in the rally. For the first time, women officers from the security forces also joined in the rally to show solidarity in marking the Day. UNIC, UNIFEM and UNODC were some of the UN agencies taking part in the rally. Besides, UNIC facilitated in the placement of UN joint statement on Women's Day, the Prime Minister's message and the statement of National Women's Commission's Chairperson in various newspapers.



Nepal Police Force participating in International Women's Day 2009. Photo: UNIC

UN News

An improved madrasa- a peace dividend for a religious minority



Students studying at madrasa in Tulsiyahi Nikash Village in Dhanusha district. Photo: UNDP

Dhanusha, March: Children aged between 5 and 15 years are reciting the holy Quran in their madrasa in Tulsiyahi Nikash village, Dhanusha. Since 2007 this madrasa has been housed in a new building constructed with support from UNDP's Quick Impact for Peace Support Initiative programme (QIPSI). Until then the school had been based in a rented room as the Government had not responded to the community's many pleas to improve the school. Neither was the school officially recognised—meaning that it could not follow the regular curriculum.

Nepal's Muslims number over one million and are one of the most disadvantaged and socially marginalized groups in Nepal. The government's new policy, since 2007/08, of registering madrasas with the district education boards has provided huge benefits to Nepal's Muslim children, allowing them to study Nepal's regular school curriculum alongside their religious education. The teachers are now provided and paid for by the Government. The Government's recognition of madrasas and QIPSI's support has met the demands of the Tulsiyahi Nikash villagers. A community member says, "If it had not been for the improvements to our madrasa, we would have had no option but to have picked up arms and joined the Madhesi insurgency to oppose the Government."

The new madrasa cost Rs 406,869 to build of which the programme provided Rs 394,000 with the rest met by local contributions. Sugra Khatoon, a parent, says, "We are very grateful to the programme for giving our children their right to be educated. We now feel that we are a part of the country and not just a marginalized religious minority".

To directly support peace building, UNDP launched a Quick Impact and Peace Support Initiative (QIPSI) initially in the 10 Eastern, Central and Western Terai districts of Saptari, Sunsari, Siraha, Dhanusha, Mahottarai, Sarlahi, Rautahat, Bara, Parsa, and Kapilbastu in late 2007.

These districts were badly affected by the Madhesi conflict. The first phase QIPSI was implemented by three existing UNDP-supported projects, the Decentralized Local Governance Support Programme (DLGSP), the Micro-enterprise Development Programme (MEDEP) and the Community Based Disaster Management Programme (CBDMP).

UNDP has allocated $2 million (Rs. 126,000,000) through this project to improve the livelihoods of poor and excluded communities in these districts to help restore peace and social harmony.

In 2008, the Royal Norwegian Embassy and UNDP pledged an additional $1.5 million (NOK 10 million) to continue the programme in 11 eastern Terai and 9 mid and far western districts, under the DLGSP. (Source: UNDP)

UN in General

Calendar of conferences and meetings of the United Nations for 2009

English, French & Spanish: http://www.un.org/Docs/journal/asp/ws.asp?m=A/AC.172/2009/2

In addition to the UN conferences and meetings, the calendar for the principal organs of the specialized agencies, the International Atomic Energy Agency and of treaty bodies, is also included.

UNEP website redesign

http://www.unep.org

The UN Environment Programme (UNEP) has redesigned its website. The new site is organized by priority themes: Climate Change, Disasters and conflicts, Ecosystem management, Environmental governance, Harmful substances, Resource efficiency, and other thematic areas. The publications page (http://www.unep.org/publications/) is prominent on all the main pages and highlights several recent publications.

Strengthening the capacity of the United Nations to manage and sustain peacekeeping operations: Report of the Secretary-General (A/63/702)

English, French & Spanish: http://www.un.org/Docs/journal/asp/ws.asp?m=A/63/702

This report summarizes the work on peacekeeping reform and highlights the progress made to date. In addition, the Summary report of the 2008 Parliamentary Hearing held in New York, 20-21 Nov. 2008, has also been issued (A/63/729 - http://www.un.org/Docs/journal/asp/ws.asp?m=A/63/729). The hearing was entitled, "Towards Effective Peacekeeping and the Prevention of Conflict: Delivering on our commitments."

United Nations Peacekeeping Operations – Background Note: 28 February 2009 (DPI/1634/Rev.94)

English: http://www.un.org/Depts/dpko/dpko/bnote.htm

UN News

Water, Environmental Sanitation and Hygiene Programme Dissemination Workshop in Kathmandu



Participants in WESH project dissemination workshop. Photo: UN-HABITAT



Chief Technical Advisor South-Asia Dr. Roshan Raj Shrestha delivering the presentation. Photo: UN-HABITAT

Kathmandu 13 March: UN-HABITAT Water for Asian Cities Programme (UN-HABITAT) and WaterAid in Nepal (WAN) organized a Dissemination Workshop on 13 March 2009 in Kathmandu to disseminate the best practices, success stories, challenges and lesson learnt of the Environmental Sanitation and Hygiene (WESH) Programme.

As government agencies, UN Agency, International/Non-Government Organizations (I/NGOs) and community worked cordially while implementing WESH programme activities, the programme reveals a good example of cooperation among different stakeholders.

Speaking at the programme, Joint Secretary at Ministry of Physical Planning and Works (MPPW) Suman Sharma opined that the Government agencies, I/NGOs and community must work together in order to extend safe drinking water and sanitation facilities.

Coordinator of Health Sector Reform Unit at Ministry of Health (MoH) Baburam Marasini believed that WATSAN is not an issue of a single ministry as unsafe drinking water and poor sanitation directly influence the public health. Hence, there should be inter-ministerial coordination to improve WATSAN sector – he said.

Non-governmental organizations usually undertake projects on a pilot basis and they can not do it on mass scale although their works have proven to be innovative and cost effective. “Therefore, the government should take the initiative to replicate such projects on a mass scale to increase access to safe water and improve sanitation,” said Dr. Roshan Raj Shrestha, Chief Technical Advisor of UN-HABITAT.

Mr. Sanjaya Adhikary, Country Director , WaterAid Nepal Said “In order to achieve universal access, the water and sanitation sector, besides improving its activities, needs an increased budget of at least $23 million. At present however the sector is only able to utilize 67% of its allocated budget. It therefore needs an improvement in policy to be able to achieve better results. He announced that this year, for the first time, a separate sanitation budget has been allocated.

Since majority of urban dwellers, especially urban poor are still distance away from safe drinking water and proper sanitation (WATSAN), UN-HABITAT and WAN jointly launched WESH Programme in 2007 in Nepal through local partner NGOs viz. LUMANTI and CIUD in close collaboration with local authorities and communities. The programme piloted various WATSAN activities in three diverse urban/ peri-urban locations of the country viz. Lubhoo in Lalitpur, Narayantole in Kathmandu and Bharatpur that improved the water, sanitation and hygiene situation of these communities.

Some exemplary works has been done in these communities. As an example, in Bharatpur Municipality, the programme conceptualized and established a community level biogas system at Lankhu –a squatter community of 17 households. This biogas system not only takes care of the waste and wastewater of the community but also of the solid waste from the neighbouring community. It has improved neighborhood environment in Lankhu and contributed towards local livelihood opportunities. Likewise, a community owned and managed decentralized water supply system has also been established in Jakhadimai. Another example can be taken of the up-flow bio-filter piloted in Narayantole to treat the wastewater from about 20 households. A major milestone has been the establishment of a slaughter house at Hyumat of Kathmandu.

UN News

UN Event for April 2009

Thursday, 2 April: World Autism Day

On Tuesday 18 December 2007, the General Assembly adopted a resolution to designate 2 April as World Autism Day. The day will mark the beginning of Autism Month and is meant to raise awareness about the disease and encourage research and early childhood screening.

Saturday, 4 April: International Day For Mine Awareness And Assistance In Mine Action



http://www.mineaction.org

The United Nations General Assembly has declared 4 April the International Day for Mine Awareness and Assistance in Mine Action. The day will raise awareness about landmines and progress toward their eradication. April 4 was designated as a day of remembrance by UN Resolution A/c.4/60/L.7/rev.1 on November 8, 2005.

Tuesday, 7 April: World Health Day



http://www.un.org/Depts/dhl/health

Each year on April 7th, the world celebrates World Health Day. On this day around the globe, thousands of events mark the importance of health for productive and happy lives.

Thursday, 23 April: World Book And Copyright Day



http://www.un.org/depts/dhl/book

23 April is a symbolic date for world literature for on this date in 1616, Cervantes, Shakespeare and Inca Garcilaso de la Vega all died. It is also the date of birth or death of other prominent authors such as Maurice Druon, Haldor K.Laxness, Vladimir Nabokov, Josep Pla and Manuel Mejía Vallejo.

It was a natural choice for UNESCO's General Conference, held in Paris in 1995, to pay a world-wide tribute to books and authors on this date, encouraging everyone, and in particular young people, to discover the pleasure of reading and gain a renewed respect for the irreplaceable contributions of those who have furthered the social and cultural progress of humanity. In this respect, UNESCO created both the World Book and Copyright Day and the UNESCO Prize for Children's and Young People's Literature in the Service of Tolerance.

Raju's journey to become an entrepreneur



Raju taking out the candles from the frame. Photo: UNDP

Kathmandu, 31 March: Raju Kumar Maharjan, 34, of Panga, Kirtipur has transformed his life since starting up a small business. He was an alcoholic but has turned away from drinking as he is now busy making colourful candles for sale. He makes at least 100 candles of various sizes in a full day's work.

"I became an alcoholic by falling into bad company. I was working as a sub-contractor for construction works but the contractors stopped trusting me and I no longer had any work," he recalls. His health was deteriorating and his wife, daughter and sisters pleaded with him to stop drinking as his habit was getting worse day by day. The family admitted him to the Richmond Rehabilitation Centre supported by the UNDP's HIV/AIDS programme. The Centre also helps people to give up alcohol dependency.

During the course of his recovery at the Centre, Raju attended a 'Start Improve Your Business', a 9-day course, supported by the National Enterprise Development Centre for Nepal (NEDC/N) and UNDP's Micro-enterprise Development (MEDEP) and HIV/AIDS Programme. There he learned how to make candles.

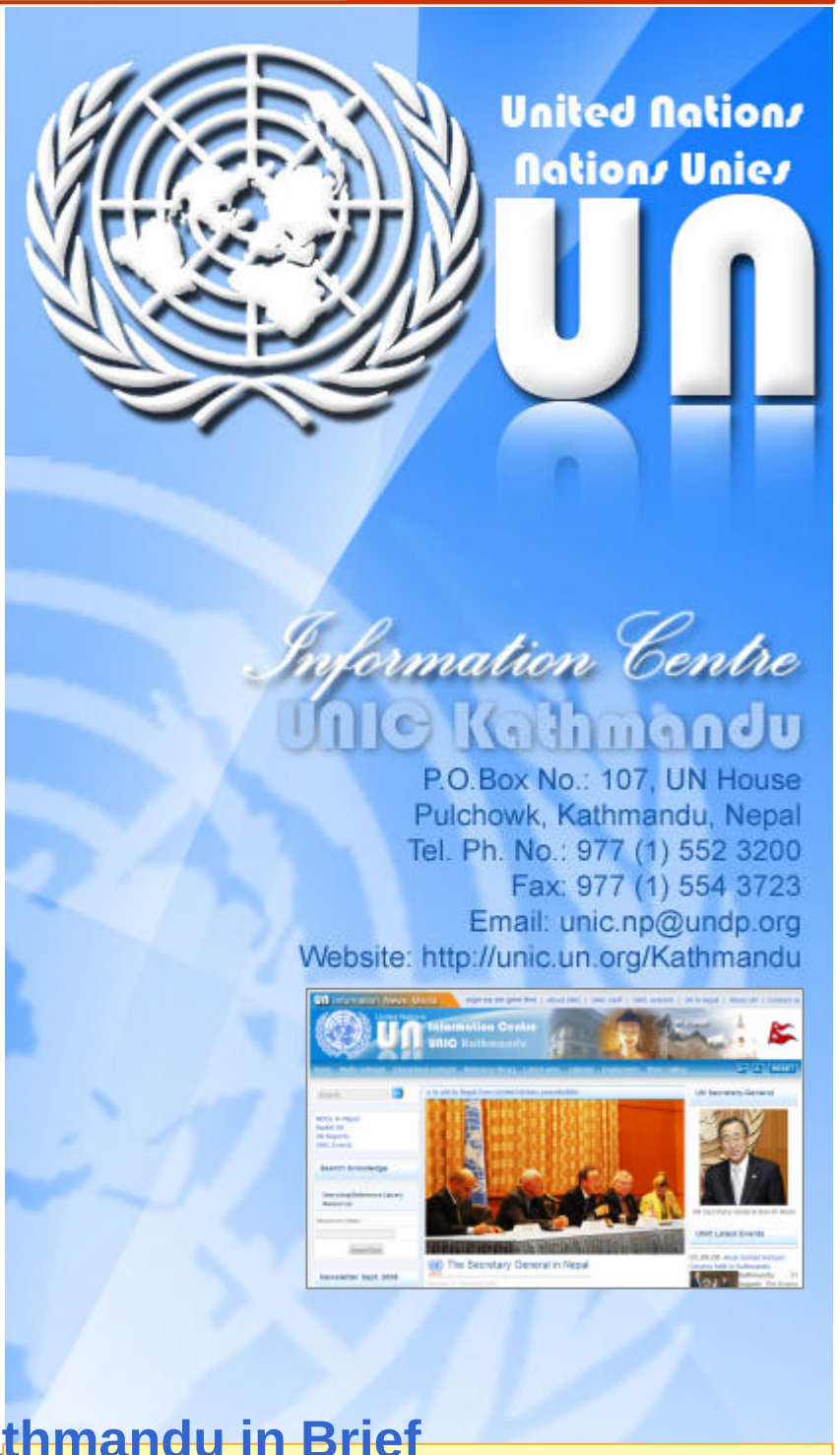
Also, his participation in a two-day training on 'Appreciative Inquiry' conducted in July-August 2008, helped him to develop positive thinking. During the course, Raju was inspired by watching a documentary film of people who had taken similar training courses and had gone on to establish successful small businesses. After spending six months at the Rehabilitation Centre, Raju returned home to set up his candle-making enterprise.

MEDEP supported him to buy the initial raw materials of wax, thread and a frame for making candles. In his first five months, supported by his family, Raju has invested 25,000 rupees and has made a profit of 10,000 rupees so far. He sells his candles to the nearby shops. The many hours of daily power cuts mean there is a high demand for andles. More than the financial aspect of his business his family is very happy that he has completely recovered and is busy working. His family and neighbours are amazed at his speedy recovery and are helping him to regain his confidence and build up his business. Raju says, "I have not been able to meet the demand for candles but I can expand this business if I can get more resources and put in more hours." These days, his family and neighbours see him as an emerging entrepreneur rather than an alcoholic. Inspired by his success, his sister is now starting to learn the business from him ! (Source: UNDP)

UN Resource Materials

UN Nepal

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http://www.adb.org
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UNIC Kathmandu in Brief

UNIC Kathmandu is located in the UN House where most of the UN agencies in Nepal are also located. UNIC has a same entrance for visitors to facilitate their access into the Centre - be it to consult the reference library; to attend press conferences or for seeking information on UN related issues.

UNIC undertakes extensive press activities, such as organizing press conferences for visiting UN officials, and for other UN agencies located in Nepal. It helps to prepare joint statements for the UN Country Team on various important issues and disseminates statements of the UN Secretary-General and other press releases/news/articles/reports coming from UN Headquarters. It is fully accessible to media persons and visitors during office hours.

http://unic.un.org/kathmandu

In its constant endeavor to upgrade its service delivery with new and innovative approach through recent Information Technology, UNIC Kathmandu has implemented the electronics library system with internet facility to visitors as well as eCatalogue for fast and efficient tracking of available contents in reference library. This catalogue is available online for home users as well as for other individuals.

URL:http://kathmandu.unic.org/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=80&Itemid=73